

[Mrs. Tommie Clicko]

Beliefs and Customs - Folkstuff [2?]

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER DOROTHY WEST 228 W. 22nd St. New York City

ADDRESS 228 W. 22nd St. New York City

DATE September 15, 1938

SUBJECT INTERVIEW WITH MRS. TOMMIE CLICKO.

1. Date and time of interview

September 14, 1938 - 1-3 P. M.

2. Place of interview

Home of informant.

3. Name and address of informant

Mrs. Tommy Clicko 272 Manhattan Avenue

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

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5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Middle-class neighborhood: Negroes, Porto Ricans, and a scattering of Greeks and Irish. Informant has bedroom and living room and the use of the kitchen in a 5 room apartment. Interview in living room: furnished with an overstuffed sofa and overstuffed chair. One straight chair, an old-fashioned radio with bench, an upright card table, 2 smoking stands. There is a fireplace in the room and on the mantle there were two china figures of the kind popular a generation ago. Smoked throughout interview.

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NEW YORK

FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER Dorothy West

ADDRESS 228 W. 22nd St. New York City

DATE September 15, 1938

SUBJECT INTERVIEW WITH MRS. TOMMIE CLICKO.

1. Ancestry

American Negro

2. Place and date of birth

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Atlanta, Georgia - October 26, 1879

3. Family

Husband in Sea View. Daughter married and living elsewhere.

4. Places lived in, with dates

Atlanta until 1898, St. Louis, Chicago, Ohio (?), and has been in New York 20 or more years. Has lived in the North for 39 years

5. Education, with dates

Grade school

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

Dressmaker

7. Special skills and interests

Card playing. (Social)

8. Community and religious activities

None because of ill health.

9. Description of informant

5' 4 1/2", weighs 120 lbs. Beautiful warm brown skin. Black hair mixed with gray. Gold earrings. Spry, upright carriage -scarcely looking her 59 years. Dry humor.

10. Other Points gained in interview

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER Dorothy West

ADDRESS 228 W. 22nd St. New York City

DATE September 15, 1938

SUBJECT INTERVIEW WITH MRS. TOMMIE CLICKO.

I was born in Atlanta, Georgia. I'll be 59 next month. I'm getting so old I can't remember anything. I read something this morning in the paper and I couldn't explain (repeat) it fifteen minutes later. I'll be 59 on October 26 and I had to go to some old insurance papers to get that. My memory isn't any good anymore. I've forgotten the day I got married. I know the date was December 14, 1898.

We used to play "Spinning the Plate" and "Ring Around the Rosey-Bush".

"Spinning the Plate"

You spin the plate...yes, an ordinary plate...and if it stays up and doesn't fall, you're the winner. The one who gets five out of nine (player who spins it five out of nine times) is the head boy. Then the head boy had to kiss you. Boys and girls played together and took turns. You didn't want to kiss when you was a young lady.

"Ring Around the Rosey-Bush"

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You had a ring and then you'd choose the prettiest girl.

2

She'd choose the prettiest boy. Then the next prettiest and so on. When you'd choose somebody, you'd kiss...I don't remember the words. I'll have to see a cousin of mine. She's a woman sixty-four years old and don't wear glasses. She'll remember. She's got a remarkable memory...

I've been North 39 years. I went to St. Louis after my marriage in 1898. My husband was a music-writer (informant is now married to second husband). Then we went to Chicago where he got a substantial salary.

I've got the first insurance policy given to Negroes. I got it 42 years ago in the South. There were 13 policies put out by the Providence Life. They called them all in but I've still got mine. The Metropolitan tried to buy it back but I wouldn't sell it. Forty-two years ago I got it.

(A man came in to see the informant, a friend, and the informant's daughter called him "Pappy", which is apparently his nick-name. The informant called him a "boy". In appearance the man looked as old or older than Mrs. Clicko but she explained that he was "only 42" and "just a boy".)

They're wearing "Bird of Paradise" again. The young folks are wearing them on their hats. 'Course olf folks ain't wearing 'em so much. I've got some Birds of Paradise" and ostrich plumes. I've had 'em for thirty years. I've got \$400 worth of stuff in there. (She gestured toward her bedroom.) I was offered \$35 for 'em but I wouldn't sell 'em. \$400 worth of stuff. I'm not going to sell 'em for \$35.

I went to a spiritualist last night. It was the first time I've ever been to one...Once before I went. I lost a diamond necklace, 3 diamonds set in platinum, and I told a friend about losing my necklace and she told me to go to a spiritualist. I went to her and she told me that I'd get it back, and that the person who had it would surprise me to death. Right after

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that I was invited out to dinner. I didn't know that———(her hostess) knew those people, and on the woman's neck was my necklace. I put my hands up to her neck to take it off and she resented it so I took her too!...I went to this woman last night and she told me that a lady was coming to see me today on a good mission. She told me not to be leery because Christianity was behind it. (She hesitated.) Lessen another one comin' with Christianity behind her. That old woman gave out a number about three months ago. The people played it and sure enough it came out. A woman in this house hit. She gave out a number last night and said that for all those who believe in the books she was giving 'em a number. She said to play it for nine days. One old woman was at the meeting last night and she had hit on the number the spiritualist woman had given out before. She said, "I cotched th' number an' it tickles". You don't pay to go in (the spiritualist meeting) but when you go, you drop in something like a penny or two pennys. Just some little something. That makes her carfare.

(The informant's daughter, and a neighbor in the apartment house had come in and the conversation was general and could not be held to any particular topic. The informant was not encouraged to continue her conversation because the other two women in the room were too young to make any real contribution to the interview, and they were entering into everything that the informant was saying.)

If I ever get old, I'd like to go to the old folks' home. It's nice out there. Out there at Sea View they've got a nice one.

4

It's a nice building and they've got little apartments like. Each little apartment has a kitchenette with everything in it. There is an old couple out there. They went out there — they didn't have to go, but they wanted their children to have as much as they can and not be bothered with them, so they went out there. They're happy and satisfied. The only thing is, they can't sleep together. They just have single beds in the rooms. He sleeps in his little room and she sleeps in hers.

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I see where Mrs. _____ (an acquaintance of the informant) was arrested for numbers. That woman certainly does stink! She never took a bath in her life. That's the truth...White folks are like that, too. They're filthy. They don't like water...Mrs. _____ got more money than all of us put together but she's dirty and stingy. She used to buy a roast on Saturday for Sunday. Then she'd have roast-beef, pork, it wasn't always the same kind of roast...for Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Then she'd have fish on Friday and Saturday and start all over again with a roast on Sunday. If she cooked lima beans or white beans, she'd count them before she put 'em in the pot. Then when she got ready to put 'em on your plate, she counted 'em again. Rice the same way. You know when a woman's starts countin' grains of rice, she's crazy or something. And you'd better not ask for a second helping. You wouldn't get it. Her husband neither. He really loves her, as much as she smells. He's bein' held in a \$1500 bail, too. One Christmas a bunch of us got together and bought six bars of Lifebuoy soap and a box of mum and fixed it up pretty and sent it to her through the mail. You know what happened? It was the funniest thing! She 5 didn't know who sent it to her so she gave it to us. She said she didn't use "any Lifebuoy soap". Said she didn't need it.

(The informant's daughter began to talk to and tease her mother after the neighbor had left the apartment. The two following expressions were used by the informant in speaking of her daughter: "she's got on her talkin' hat and shoes today" - she feels like taling talking . "I don't take no teeth from fever" - I won't brook impudence and impertinence.

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FORM D Extra Comment

STATE New York

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NAME OF WORKER Dorothy West

ADDRESS New York City

DATE September 14, 1938 SUBJECT Interview with Mrs. Tommie Clicko.

Informant was very friendly throughout interview. Interviewer feels that the interview would have been much more fruitful had the informant been alone. Informant has promised to recall as much of her early life as she can between this and a second interview.

Informant's husband is at Sea View Sanitarium for tuberculosis. Informant is herself ill with the same complaint.